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MODERN LANGUAGE NOTES

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SOURCE-MATERIAL FOR JONSON'S PLAYS

PART I

Source-noting is an interesting occupation. Fortunately it is also useful, since we cannot place a writer historically until we have found out what he got from others and how he used what he took. Comparative literature, too, owes what solidity it has as an intellectual discipline to the patient accumulation of innumerable bits of evidence of this character. The following list of parallels, scrappy as it is in the main, has its value from both of these points of view. I do not think that, except in one or two stated cases, any of these instances has been hitherto noticed. The text of the passages quoted from Jonson is taken from my copies of the various folios, but the line numbering is, except for prose passages, that of the Yale Series for plays included therein; for *Sejanus*, the numbering is that of the Belles Lettres edition.

Alchemist

Dedication.

"In the age of sacrifices, the truth of religion was not in the greatnesse, & fat of the offrings, but in the deuotion, and zeale of the sacrificers: Else, what could a handfull of gummes haue done in the sight of a hecatombe? or, how might I appeare at this altar, except with those affections," etc.

Seneca, *De Ben.*, I, vi, 3: "Non est beneficium ipsum, quod numeratur aut traditur: sicut ne in victimis quidem, licet opimæ sint auroque præfulgeant, deorum est honor, sed pia ac recta voluntate venerantium. itaque boni etiam farre ac fitilla religiosi sunt, mali rursus non effugiunt inpietatem, quamvis aras sanguine multo cruentauerint."

So in the Dedication of Folio 1623: "And many nations (we have heard) that had not gums and incense, obtained their requests with a leavened cake. It was no fault to approach their gods, by what means they could: and the most, though meanest, of things are made more precious, when they are dedicated to temples."

In the quarto Dedication the above passage is followed by these lines: "Or how, yet, might a gratefull minde be furnish'd against the iniquitie of Fortune; except, when she fail'd it, it had power to impart it selfe? A way found out, to ouercome euen those, whom Fortune hath enabled to returne most, since they, yet leaue themselues more."¹ Here again Jonson has in mind the thought which Seneca again and again expresses, that in returning a benefit it is not the value of the thing returned but the mind in which the return is made that is of importance. More especially, he has in mind the speech of Æschines to Socrates, *ibid.*, viii: "nihil . . . dignum te, quod dare tibi possim, invenio et hoc uno modo pauperem me esse sentio? itaque dono tibi quod unum habeo, me ipsum. hoc munus rogo qualecunque est boni consulas cogitesque alios, cum multum tibi darent, plus sibi reliquisse."

I, i.

Face and Subtle are brought in quarrelling. In the course of the quarrel Face describes the situation in which he found Subtle (at Pie-corner, taking in a meal of steam from the cooks' stalls, pinned up in rags, etc.), and then goes on to say that he will undo all his good work and bring Subtle, because of his ingratitude, to ruin. Compare the soliloquy of Argyrippus in Plautus, *Asinaria*, I, ii:

Ego (pol) te redigam eodem unde orta es, ad egestatis terminos.
 Ego (edepol) te faciam, ut, quæ sis nunc, et quæ fueris, scias.
 Quæ, priusquam istam adii, atque amans ego animum meum isti dedi,
 Sordido vitam oblectabas pane, in pannis, inopia;
 Atque, ea si erant, magnas habebas omnibus Diis gratias;
 Eadem nunc, quom est melius, me, quojus opera est, ignoras, mala.

Bartholomew Fair

II, v, 29-37.

Vrs. Hang 'em, rotten, roguy Cheaters, I hope to see 'hem plagu'd one day (pox'd they are already, I am sure) with leane

¹ Text from Hathaway's edition.

play-house poultry, **that** has the boany rumpe, sticking out like the Ace of Spades, or the point of a Partizan, that euery rib of 'hem is like the tooth of a Saw: and will so grate 'hem with their hips, & shoulders, as (take 'hem altogether) they were as good lye with a hurdle.

Qvar. Out vpon her, how she drips! she's able to giue a man the sweating Sicknesse, with looking on her.

This passage seems adapted from Martial, XI, c:

Habere amicum nolo, Flacce, subtilem,
Cuius lacertos anuli mei cingant,
Quae clune nudo radat et genu pungat,
Cui serra lumbis, cuspidibus emicet culo.
Sed idem amicum nolo mille librarum:
Carnarius sum, pinguiarius non sum.

Catiline

The sources of *Catiline* have never been satisfactorily exhibited. Whalley, Gifford, Saegelken (*Ben Jonson's Römerdramen*, 1880), and Vogt (*Ben Jonson's Catiline*, etc., 1903) have all done something, but even the debt of Jonson to Sallust and Cicero has not been thoroughly worked out. There is, I believe, an unprinted Yale thesis on *Catiline* by A. L. Wright (Schelling, *Eliz. Drama*, II, 499), but no one knows what it contains. I shall not attempt to discuss the matter fully, and shall not deal with Sallust and Cicero, but shall merely call attention to a few borrowings from other sources.

I, i,

as he would

Goe on vpon the gods, kisse lightning, etc.

Seneca, *Medea*, 424-5:

invadam deos
et cuncta quatiam.

The character of Cethegus owes some hints to that of Capaneus in Statius; Cethegus refers to Capaneus as his ideal and quotes from Statius in IV, 5.

I, i,

It is, me thinks, a morning, full of fate!
It riseth slowly, as her sullen carre

Had all the weights of sleepe, and death hung at it! . . .
And her sick head is bound about with clouds.

Perhaps suggested by Lucan, *Phars.*, I, 232-5:

iamque dies primos belli uisura tumultus
exoritur. seu sponte deum, seu turbidus Auster
impulerat, maestam tenuerunt nubila lucem.

The rugged Charon fainted,
And ask'd a nauty, rather then a boate,
To ferry ouer the sad world that came.

Petronius, 121, ll. 117-9:

vix navita Porthmeus
sufficiet simulacra virum traducere cumba;
classe opus est.

Seneca, *Œdipus*, 166 ff.:

quique capaci turbida cumba
flumina servat durus senio
navita crudo, vix assiduo
bracchia conto lassata refert,
fessus turbam vectare novam.

Neither Charon nor his weariness nor the necessity of a fleet are to be found in Lucan, whom, as Whalley says, Jonson is utilizing here.

I, i.

Vogt says that the representation of the luxurious life of the Roman nobles given by Catiline in his speech is based on Jonson's knowledge of the Roman satirists, but that no special sources can be given. This statement is not quite accurate. The whole speech would seem to be inspired by Petronius, 119 and following sections, and one or two of the details come thence.

The riuer Phasis
Cannot affoord 'hem fowle; nor Lucrine lake
Oysters enow:
To please the witty gluttony of a meale.

Petronius, ll. 34-8:

atque Lucrinis
eruta litoribus verdunt conchyliis cenas,
ut renovent per damna famem. iam Phasidos unda

orbata est avibus, mutoque in litore tantum
solae desertis adspirant frondibus aurae.

And cf. the ingeniosa gula of l. 33:

yet, they cannot tame,
Or ouer-come their riches! Not, by making
Bathes, orchards, fish-pooles! letting in of seas
Here! and, then there, forcing 'hem out againe,
With mountaynous heaps.

Petronius, ll. 85-9:

aspice late
luxuriam spoliolorum et census in damna furentem . . .
expelluntur aquae saxis, mare nascitur arvis,
et permutata rerum statione rebellant.

But the principal borrowings from this poem of Petronius are to be found in the chorus at the end of the first act, to which Whalley and Gifford have called attention.

I, chorus:

Can nothing great, and at the height
Remaine so long? but it's owne weight
Will ruine it?

Livy, I, Praef. 4: et quae ab exiguis profecta initiis eo creverit, ut iam magnitudine laboret sua. Vogt, 16-17, cites Horace, *Epode* XVI, 1, which is also apt, and his statement that Gifford is mistaken in finding the source of the opening of this chorus in Petronius is quite correct.

II, i:

You thinke, this state becomes you?
By Hercvles, it do's not. Looke i' your glasse, now,
And see, how sciruely that countenance shewes;
You would be loth to owne it.

Seneca, *De Ira*, II, xxxvi: "Quibusdam, ut ait Sextius, iratis profuit adspexisse speculum. perturbavit illos tanta mutatio sui."

II, i,

I am, now, faine to giue to them, and keepe
Musique, and a continuall table, to inuite 'hem.

Cf. Martial, II, lvi:

Sed mera narrantur mendacia: non solet illa
Accipere omnino. Quid solet ergo? Dare.

And compare the 'numerare solet' of XI, lxii.

II, i.

If you doe this to practise on me' or finde
At what forc'd distance you can hold your seruant;
That ' it be an artificiall trick, to enflame,
And fire me more, fearing my loue may need it,
As, heretofore, you ha' done: why, proceede.
Fvl. As I ha' done heretofore? *Cvr.* Yes, when you'd faine
Your husbands ieaousie, your servants watches,
Speake softly, and runne often to the dore,
Or to the windore, forme strange feares that were not;
As if the pleasure were lesse acceptable,
That were secure. *Fvl.* You are an impudent fellow.
Cvr. And, when you might better haue done it, at the gate,
To take me in at the casement. *Fvl.* I take you in?
Cvr. Yes, you my lady. And, then, being a-bed with you,
To haue your well taught wayter, here, come running,
And cry, her lord, and hide me without cause,
Crush'd in a chest, or thrust vp in a chimney.

From Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*, III, 601 ff.:

Incitat et ficti tristis custodia servi
Et nimium duri cura molesta viri.
Quae venit ex tuto, minus est accepta voluptas:
Ut sis liberior Thaide, finge metus!
Cum melius foribus possis, admitte fenestra
Inque tuo vultu signa timentis habe;
Callida prosiliat dicatque ancilla 'perimus!
Tu iuvenem trepidum quolibet abde loco!

Saegelken, 27, and Vogt, 21, are hence mistaken in citing Horace as the source of this passage.

III, i:

Nor haue but few of them, in time beene made
Your Consuls, so; new men, before me, none:
At my first suite; in my iust yeere; preferd
To all competitors, etc.

Cicero, *De Officiis*, II, xvii: Nobis quoque licet in hoc quodam modo gloriari; nam pro amplitudine honorum, quos cunctis suffragiis adepti sumus nostro quidem anno, quod contigit eorum nemini, quos modo nominavi, etc.

III i,

Each petty hand
Can steere a ship becalm'd; but he that will
Gouerne, and carry her to her ends, must know, etc.

Seneca, *Epistulae*, lxxxv, 34: Non tamquam gubernatori, sed tamquam naviganti nocet [tempestas] . alioquin gubernatoris artem adeo non impedit, ut ostendat: tranquillo enim, ut aiunt, quilibet gubernator est. navigio ista obsunt, non rectori eius, qua rector est. Vogt, p. 23, suggests Horace, Odes I, xiv, but there is no similarity between the two passages.

III, i:

Repulse vpon repulse? An in-mate, Consul?
That I could reach the axell, where the pinnes are,
Which bolt this frame; that I might pull 'hem out,
And pluck all into chaos, with my selfe. . . .
Who would not fall with all the world about him?

Gifford found the source of the last line in Seneca, *Thyestes*, 883-4:

vitae est avidus quisquis non vult
mundo secum pereunte mori.

But these lines are at the end of a mournful chorus, and the meaning is: When the world dies, who would wish to survive it? Catiline has a different meaning: When I die, let me pull down the world to destruction with me. This is precisely the meaning of Rufinus, in Claudian, *In Rufinum*, II, 17 ff.:

Quid restat, nisi cuncta novo confundere luctu
Insontesque meae populos miscere ruinae?
Everso iuvat orbe mori. Solacia leto
Exitium commune dabit, nec territus ante, etc.

III, ii, 1 ff.

Is there a heauen? and gods? and can it be
They should so slowly heare, so slowly see!
Hath Iove no thunder?

Seneca, *Phaedra*, 671-2:

Magne regnator deum,
tam lentus audis scelera? tam lentus vides?
et quando saeva fulmen emittes manu,
si nunc serenum est?

He acts the third crime, that defends the first.

Presumably the second crime would be the not repenting, and the third the defending. Cf. *Sententiae falso inter Publilianas receptae*, ed. Woelfflin, 147: Geminat peccatum, quem delicti non pudet.

III, ii:

Ambition, like a torrent, ne're looks back;
And is a swelling, and the last affection
A high minde can put off.

Seneca, *Epi.* lxxxiv, 11: relinque ambitum: tumida res est, vana, ventosa. Cicero, *De Officiis*, I, viii: Est autem in hoc genere molestum, quod in maximis animis splendidissimisque ingeniis plerumque existunt honoris, imperii, potentiae, gloriae cupiditates. Clarendon, *History of the Rebellion*, ed. 1826, I, 62: Ambition "is a weed (if it be a weed) apt to grow in the best soils." Milton, *Lycidas*, 70-1: Desire of fame is "That last infirmity of Noble mind." Dryden, *Abs. and Achit.*, I, 305 ff.:

Desire of power, on earth a vicious weed,
Yet sprung from high is of celestial seed;
In God 'tis glory, and when men aspire,
'Tis but a spark too much of heavenly fire.

And *ibid.*, 372:

Desire of greatness is a god-like sin.

Massinger, *Very Woman*, v, iv:

Though the desire of fame be the last weakness
Wise men put off.

Sir John van Olden Barneveldt, I, i:

And you shall find that the desire of glory
Was the last frailty wise men ere putt of.

III, iii.

Caes Be resolute,
And put your enterprise in act: the more
Actions of depth, and danger are consider'd,
The lesse assuredly they are perform'd

Plutarch, *The Apotheisms of Kings*, Transl. 1870, I, 247: Cæsar said "great and surprising enterprises were not to be consulted upon but done."

III, chorus, 1 ff.

What is it, heauens, you prepare
 With so much swiftnesse, and so sodaine rising?
 There are no sonnes of earth, that dare,
 Againe, rebellion? or the gods surprising?
 The world doth shake, and nature feares.

Seneca, *Thyestes*, 803 ff.

quae causa tuos limite certo
 deiecit equos? numquid aperto
 carcare Ditis victi temptant
 bella Gigantes? numquid Tityos
 pectore fesso renovat veteres
 saucius iras?

IV, ii:

For fall I will with all, ere fall alone.

Claudian, *In Rufinum*, II, 166-7

Haec cervix non sola cadet, miscebitur alter
 Sanguis, nec Stygias ferar incommitatus ad undas.

IV, ii,

Catiline, in the course of his answer to the charges against him, suddenly turns threateningly upon Cicero, who calls for help. Thereupon Catiline disclaims any intention of doing him harm. There is nothing corresponding to this passage in Sallust or Cicero's orations, and it is probable that Jonson was thinking of the similar incident in the eleventh book of the *Aeneid*, 406 ff. Turnus, speaking against the proposals of Drances:

vel cum se pavidum contra mea iurgia fingit,
 artificis scelus, et formidine crimen acerbat.
 numquam animam talem dextra hac (absiste moveri)
 amittes.

So Catiline:

In vaine thou do'st conceiue, ambitious orator,
 Hope of so braue a death, as by this hand.

V, i, 5 ff.

We not, now,
 Fight for how long, how broad, how great, and large
 Th' extent, and bounds o' th' people of Rome shall be;
 But to retaine what our great ancestors

The quarrell is not, now, of fame, of tribute, ...
 but for your owne republique,
 For the rais'd temples of th' immortall gods,
 For all your fortunes, altars, and your fires,
 For the deare soules of your lou'd wiues, and children,
 Your parents tombes, your rites, lawes, libertie,
 And, briefly, for the safety of the world.

There is a rather striking resemblance, though I daresay there is no reason to suppose borrowing, since the ideas are what would naturally come up in the mind of a dramatist on such an occasion, to a passage in Robert Garnier's *Cornelie*, ed. Foerster, 1639 ff.:

Nous ne combattons point pour raurir des thresors,
 Nous ne combattons point pour eslargir nos bors,
 Pour vne gloire acquerre, et laisser estoffees
 Aux races aduenir nos maisons de trophées:
 Mais bien nous combatons pour nostre liberté,
 Pour le peuple Romain par la crainte escarté:
 Nous combattons, enfans, pour nostre propre vie,
 Pour les biens, les honneurs, les loix, et la patrie:
 Ores le bien, l'Empire, et l'estat des Romains,
 (Le vray prix du vainqueur) balance entre nos mains.

V, iv:

Gab. Is there a law for't, Cato? *Cat.* Do'st thou aske
 After a law, that would'st haue broke all lawes ?

Cf. Martial, II, lx:

Iam mihi dices
 "Non licet hoc." Quid? tu quod facis, Hylle, licet?

Devil is an Ass

III, iii, 40-2.

Mer. You doe not thinke, what you owe me already? *Ev.* I?
 They owe you, that meane to pay you. I'll besworne,
 I neuer meant it.

Martial, *Ep.* II, iii: Debet enim, si quis solvere, Sexte, potest.
 So in Brathwait's *The Mushrome*, in *A Strappado for the Divell*,
 1615, see reprint of 1878, p. 135:

For he is said to aw that menes to pay.

And in Samuel Sheppard's *Epigrams*, 1651, p. 107:

To J. Buzby.
 Th' art not in debt, (thou swear'st) and I dare say it,
 For those alone do owe, that meane to pay it.

In all these cases Martial's 'potest' is translated by 'means'; intention is substituted for power.

Epicoene

Prologue, 8-9:

Our wishes, like to those (make publique feasts)
Are not to please the cookes tastes, but the guests.

Martial, ix, lxxxi:

Non nimium curo: nam cenae fercula nostrae
Malim convivis quam placuisse cocis.

It will be observed that this passage supplies the figure that runs through the entire prologue. The passage from *Neptune's Triumph*, cited by Dr. Henry, is based on the same figure.

I, i, 23 ff.

Trv. Why, here's the man that can melt away his time, and neuer feesles it! what, betweene his mistris abroad, and his engle at home, high fare, soft lodging, fine clothes, and his fiddle; hee thinkes the houres ha' no wings, or the day no post-horse. Well, sir gallant, were you strooke with the plague this minute, or condemn'd to any capitall punishment to morrow, you would beginne then to thinke, and value euery article o' your time, esteeme it at the true rate, and giue all for't.

Cle. Why, what should a man doe?

Trv. Why, nothing: or that, which when 'tis done, is as idle. Harken after the next horse-race, or hunting-match; lay wagers, praise Puppy, or Pepper-corne, White-foote, Franklin; sweare vpon White-maynes partie; spend aloud, that my lords may heare you; visite my ladies at night, and bee able to giue 'hem the character of euery bowler, or better o' the greene. These be the things, wherein your fashionable men exercise themselues, and I for companie.

Cle. Nay, if I haue thy authoritie, I'll not leaue yet. Come, the other are considerations, when wee come to haue gray heads, and weake hammes, moist eyes, and shrunk members. Wee'll thinke on 'hem then; then wee'll pray, and fast.

Trv. I, and destine onely that time of age to goodnesse, which our want of abilitie will not let vs employ in euill?

Cle. Why, then 'tis time enough.

Trv. Yes: as if a man should sleepe all the terme, and thinke to effect his businesse the last day. O, Clerimont, this time, because it is an incorporeall thing, and not subiect to sense, we mocke our selues the finest out of it, with vanitie, and miserie indeede: not seeking an end of wretchednesse, but onely changing the matter still.

Cle. Nay, thou'lt not leaue now—

Trv. See but our common disease! with what iustice can wee complaine, that great men will not looke vpon vs, not be at leisure to giue our affaires

such dispatch, as wee expect, when wee will neuer doe it to our selues: nor heare, nor regard our selues.

This whole passage is partly translation, partly adaptation of Seneca, *De Brevitate Vitae*. Lines 38-46, are practically a translation, with some rearrangements of ideas, of the following, III, 5: Non pudet te reliquias vitae tibi reservare et id solum tempus bonae menti destinare, quod in nullam rem conferri possit? quam serum est tunc vivere incipere, cum desinendum est? quae tam stulta mortalitatis oblivio in quinquagesimum et sexagesimum annum differre sana consilia et inde velle vitam inchoare, quo pauci perduxerunt? Lines 30-36 are an adaptation of III, 2: Dic, quantum ex isto tempore creditor, quantum amica, quantum rex, quantum cliens abstulerit. quantum lis uxoria, quantum servorum coercitio, quantum officiosa per urbem discursatio. When in l. 51 Truewit calls this complaining of the rapid passage of time 'our common disease,' he is echoing Seneca, who at the beginning of his treatise says that it is the complaint of the most of mankind. Lines 50 ff. translate II, 5: suus nemo est. Deinde dementissima quorundam indignatio est. queruntur de superiorum fastidio, quod ipsis adire volentibus non vacaverint: audet quisquam de alterius superbia queri, qui sibi ipse numquam vacat? Ille tamen te, quisquis est, insolenti quidem voltu, sed aliquando respexit . . . ille te ad latus suum recepit: tu non inspicere te umquam, non audire dignatus est. The rapidity of the flight of time and the fact that we fail to perceive its flight are ideas several times emphasized by Seneca. Finally, lines 23-29 seem inspired by the following passage, III, 4: non observatis, quantum iam temporis transierit. velut ex pleno et abundanti perditis, cum interim fortasse ille ipse qui alicui vel homini vel rei donatur dies ultimus sit.

V, i.

The purpose of this scene is to bring Daw and La-Foole to confess that they have anticipated Morose in the enjoyment of Epicoene, a confession for which Jonson has use in the development of the plot. The underlying motif, that of belying the fame of ladies, Jonson had already touched on in the *Alchemist*, II, ii:

belye

Ladies, who are knowne most innocent, for them,

and there are other references to it in his various works. Compare Lucian, *The Rhetorician's Vade Mecum*, Fowler's translation, III, 228: "And in private you need draw the line at nothing, gambling, drink, fornication, nor adultery; the last you should boast of, whether truly or not; make no secret of it, but exhibit your notes from real or imaginary frail ones." See also Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*, II, 625 ff.

It is not, however, necessary to adduce a classical source, since there is any amount of evidence that this piece of gallantry was one of the characteristic marks of the man about town of Elizabethan days. I quote a number of illustrative passages, as commentators appear to have passed the subject.

Barnaby Rich, *Roome for a Gamester*, 1609, 27 verso: "Some to winne Opinion, are excellent in discourse at a table, they will talke of their owne activity, how many fraies they made in Fleetstreet, what Ladies and Gentlewomen came to visite them when they lay sicke of the tooth-ach, and they will sometimes vaunt of a favour from their mistres, that was scorned by the maide."

Brathwait, *Ar't Asleep Husband*, 1640, 136-7: "Yea, many of these will boast of your Favours: and in publike places speake liberally of your kindnesse. Beware of these; they are such spreading Tetters, as they will blemish the face of beauty: and ingage your Fame . . . to lasting infamy. For these will glory in their choice of Mistresses, and descant on their qualities."

Wilson, *History of Great Britain*, 1653, 147, sub anno 1620: "And such men as were affected to wantonness, would vulgarly brag of it; nay, many times to the traducing of a Ladies fame, and their own (I cannot say) innocence: For some would say, and vent it as an Apothegm, I would rather be thought to enjoy such a Lady, though I never did it, than really to enjoy her, and no body know it. Such pride was taken in sin, and so brazen-faced and impudent such crimes were then!"

Compare also, Fuller, *Holy State*, III, ch. iii, maxim 5, and note Howell's remark on the Spanish, *Letters*, ed. Jacobs, Book I, Section iii, Letter xxxii: "He is a great servant of Ladies, nor can he be blam'd, for, as I said before, he comes of a Goatish race; yet he never brags of, nor blazes abroad his doings that way, but is exceedingly careful of the repute of any Woman (a Civility that we much want in England)."

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